

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY PRESENTS

*Adventures in*  
**ODYSSEY**<sup>®</sup>



**CANDID CONVERSATIONS WITH CONNIE**

**A GIRL'S GUIDE TO GROWING UP**

# Introduction

**y**ou may know me . . . my name is Connie Kendall, and I live in Odyssey. I host a radio show called *Candid Conversations with Connie*—which is basically, well, candid conversations with me.

Because I also work at an ice-cream shop called Whit's End, I get a lot of questions from girls your age. And not just questions like “Is there a cherry on top of the Wod-Fam-Choc-Sod?”\* I get asked personal questions. Girls feel like they can ask me whatever they want, and I answer from my vast knowledge and experience. (Well . . . maybe not *vast*.)

Somehow I managed to survive my teenage years and actually enjoyed them. I know life at that age can be confusing, frustrating, and difficult at times, but I feel like I learned some things that I could share with other girls.

Girls who listened to my radio show also started asking me questions—and some of them were pretty tough. So, I thought it would be fun to get some input from my friends. We'll talk about God, self-worth, clothes, parents, friends, and even a little bit about boys.

It's a special group—this club of girl-ness. We're funny and

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\* Wod-Fam-Choc-Sod = World-Famous Chocolate Soda

smart and creative and spunky. We can be sophisticated or playful. We laugh a lot and have tons of questions. We giggle, feel, dream, and imagine. And there's something about all of us coming together that makes all those things work out in bigger and better ways.

Can't wait for you to join the fun!

Love, hugs, and chocolate sundaes,

Connie

## CHAPTER 1

# You Are Not a Can Opener

*(But God Still Thinks You're Great)*



**I**n eighth grade, I went on a field trip to a factory that made can openers. The factory consisted of a number of loud machines and a big, moving conveyor belt. One machine would pump out a glob of metal, another one would bend it, and the next would add a plastic piece. The glob went on like that, down the conveyor belt, being changed and altered until it came out as . . . ta-da! . . . a can opener. Then out came another can opener, and another one, and another one—until the box at the end was filled with perfectly formed, exactly identical kitchen utensils.

You are *not* a can opener.

But sometimes we might feel that way—as if we’re just one of billions of people God made. Even if we recognize that God created us, we still sometimes may forget He *designed* us. We weren’t formed out of a mold. He made each of us unique.

I saw how different we are at a recent slumber party, and that’s a great thing. We’re even different when we eat pizza. Outgoing Olivia likes anchovies, analyzing Emily prefers pepperoni, kindhearted Tamika craves plain cheese, athletic Camilla goes for the mushrooms, and cheerful Penny reaches for the slice with jalapeños. And me? I like pineapple and bacon.

God designed each of us to be who we are. But sometimes that’s hard to see. I shared with them some of the questions I’d received on my show, like this one:



The Bible tells us in Ephesians 2:10, “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.” My friend Eugene told me once

that the word *workmanship* comes from the Greek word *poiēma*, which is where we also get the word *poem*.

Think about that: *you are God's poem*.

A poem isn't built on a conveyor belt. It doesn't look the same as every other single poem. (What would be the point of that?) And its primary purpose isn't to be useful. I mean, when have you ever used a poem to open a can of creamed corn?

## Here's a Secret . . .

Sometimes I just imagine God looking past the solar systems that will never be seen by a human eye, the majestic sight of Niagara Falls, and the elaborate colors of the Grand Canyon—to me. And to you. He is thinking, *This is good. She is lovely. With her plain brown hair, snorty laugh, tendency to twirl her hair, big ears—all of her*. Even when there are so many things He created that I believe are more beautiful, He's still looking at me.

A poem is a reflection of the poet. It contains the writer's emotions, thoughts, and desires. And every poem is different. God doesn't assemble you; He *writes* you. And just as a poet thinks long and hard about the words he or she puts on the page, painstakingly choosing the right phrase and idea, so God designs



you. Just as a poem reflects the heart of a writer, you reflect God's heart in a way no one else does.

Look at your hand closely. We've all heard that we each have one-of-a-kind fingerprints. But that's not where our one-of-a-kind-ness ends. We also have teeth, retinas, and a scent completely exclusive to us.

So, you are just like everyone else in that you are not like anybody else! You are important and special to God, which leads to the next question:



Parts of me are ugly.  
Does God still love me?



Wow . . . I've sure felt this way. Just today I lost my temper with my friend Wooton. He spilled the ice-cream sundae he was eating, and the mess got smeared all over my new magazine. In the middle of telling him how irresponsible and clumsy he is, I realized I was late picking up Penny for our volleyball game. I hate it that I'm always running late even though I try to be punctual. At volleyball I felt really jealous of Jessica Barnes for

being such a great player. I missed every hit—except the one that bounced off my head. So instead of telling Jessica how great she did, I just pouted in the locker room. Why do I have to be so angry, rude, late, uncoordinated, and jealous? How does God love someone with that list of problems?

We all have things we don't like about ourselves—things that make us feel unlovable.

Maybe you have a weird laugh or you get irritated easily. Maybe you trip over a ball better than you kick it. Or you have hair that sticks out and up like you just put a fork in a light socket. You might look in the mirror and dislike your chubby knees or think your ears stick out too far.

But God doesn't make mistakes—and that includes when He made you. He doesn't craft a person carefully and then sit back and say, "Oops. Guess I really messed up this one. Oh well . . ."

God loves *all* of you. He designed you for a purpose. He didn't get distracted and overlook a desired trait. In fact, He's so aware of all that you are, He knows the number of hairs on your head (Luke 12:7).

You are beautiful to Him right here and now. It doesn't matter to Him if you have pimples or hand-me-down clothes, or if you lost your temper two minutes ago. He looks at you with outrageous love. You are His poem. His beloved. And He adores you.



And Psalm 139:13 tells us that God knit each one of us together in our mother's womb. Nothing about you is an accident. And since creating you mattered so much to Him, we know your every day matters to Him. He sees every tear and hears every laugh. He knows you better than you know yourself. He knows if you yelled at your sister or cried in the school bathroom. He sees your disappointment with a friend and laughs at your jokes. No one, not even your best friend, knows you like God knows you. And you can't even imagine the love He has for you. The Bible describes it as lavish, unending, and indescribable. (Here are just a few of those verses: 1 John 3:1; Psalm 139:1–6; Psalm 31:16; Psalm 32:10; and Ephesians 3:17–19. For more, google the words “Bible verses on God's love.”)



## Penny's Corner

I work at an art gallery run by Jacques Henri. One day Jacques came into the room. He was very excited. I thought he was going to tell me to stop breathing on the paint-

ings like he usually does. But instead he told me he'd just heard on the news that a long-lost painting by Claude Monet had been discovered.

"What's it look like?" I asked.

"I don't know," Henri said in his French accent.

"How much is it worth?"

"Millions, I'm sure! A find like zat is priceless!"

I was confused. "But how can you say that without even seeing the painting?"

"Zee painting is priceless because zee artist is *magnifique!*"

That's how it is with us. We're invaluable because our Artist is beyond compare. You are extraordinary simply because you are designed by the God of the universe.

## Troubles with Trixie

Some Bible translations of Ephesians 2:10 use the word *masterpiece* instead of *workmanship*. I kind of like the idea of being God's masterpiece. It means we are unique and valuable.

But here's where the problem comes in . . .

Satan doesn't want you to feel unique or valuable. He doesn't want you to realize how deeply God cares for you and loves you. So the devil is going to try to remind you that you're not good

at certain things, that you don't look perfect, that you tripped in the cafeteria and everybody laughed. He's also going to try to convince you that you're not as good as someone else—that you're somehow less valuable.

This problem showed up for me in the form of Trixie Greenwald.

Trixie has beautiful raven-black hair, stars in all the school musicals, and is a champion pole-vaulter. She is friendly, happy, and popular. Obviously, if I were like her, I'd be all those things too.

Or so I thought.

I dyed my hair black, took singing lessons, and went out for the track team so I could learn how to pole-vault. But the black hair made me look like a mortician, my singing instructor said I was more off-key than a kazoo, and my pole-vaulting was more like pole-falling-flat-on-my-face. My friend Mr. Whittaker came up to me one day after a track meet.

"Connie, do you even *like* pole-vaulting?" (He was kind enough not to mention my hair.)

And, the truth was, I didn't. I liked doing my radio show, directing plays, writing stories, and teasing my friend Eugene. That's the way God made me.

"The world already has a Trixie Greenwald," Whit told me. "What it needs is a Connie Kendall."

He was right, of course. And I went back to just being Connie—exactly who I was meant to be. (Unfortunately, it took another six months for my hair to return to being Connie.)

So if you ever want to be like a Trixie Greenwald, tell yourself, “That’s not the way God designed me.” And forget the pole-vaulting.

## Your Turn



Look up the following verses. What does each one tell you about how God thinks of you?

- Romans 8:38–39

*Hint: you are deeply and completely loved.*

- John 3:16

*Hint: He loved you so much He died for you.*

- Song of Songs 4:1

*Hint: He thinks you’re beautiful.*

- Zephaniah 3:17

*Hint: He rejoices over you.*

- Psalm 139:16

*Hint: He wrote down every day of your life.*

Think about the unique traits God gave you. Write down some things you like about yourself. If you have trouble, ask a

friend or family member to share what he or she likes about you.  
Sometimes we don't notice the great things about ourselves.

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Thank God for making you with all of these gifts.

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